



NUTS & BOLTS

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John Hest, Editor



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COMPUTER IDEAS

Ever since I became editor of NUTS & BOLTS I've received unsolicited letters from many of my readers commenting about the material in each edition. Many have said that they enjoy the "computer tips" that I've included in several issues. Since I subscribe to several computer magazines I find that my first move, when the front cover is flipped open, is to browse through for ideas that you and I can use to make our computer more efficient and more fun. So, here's one of my latest finds:

FASTER FORMATTING

If you've ever had to format a bunch of disks, you'll know what a pain in the neck it can be. That is, until now. Here's how, courtesy of PC COMPUTING magazine:

If you have two floppy drives and a hard drive, it's just about as easy as falling off a log. One drive can be 3 1/2 and the other a 5 1/4 or two of each kind. It makes no difference.

Create one batch file. Here are the steps. (By the way, the commands don't have to be in caps; I'm doing that to make it easier to understand).

1. Type copy con FORA.BAT
2. FORMAT A: <REPLY.DAT.
3. FORB
4. Hit CTRL Z (usually F6 key) ENTER

Create second batch file. Here are the steps for that.

1. Type copy con FORB.BAT
2. FORMAT B: <REPLY.DAT
3. FORA
4. Hit F6 key ENTER

Create an ASCII file, and the three keystrokes for that. I'll show the enter keystroke as ENTER, but just press the enter key.

1. Type copy con REPLY.DAT
2. ENTER
3. N ENTER (no space between N and enter)
4. Hit F6 key ENTER

Put all three files in the same directory (I put mine in a sub directory attached to my DOS directory) and make sure that the DOS, FORMAT.COM is there too.

Now, get a box of disks, put a disk in each drive and begin. Enter the command, FORA and the process begins at once. The third file you created provides all the enter strokes and the automatic "N" for no. Just keep replacing the disks. By the way, I just formatted 28 disks in 28 minutes. When you want to stop, hit Ctrl C or Ctrl Break. If that doesn't work (like my computer), reboot by hitting Ctrl-Alt-Del at the same time.

If you don't have a hard disk, you'll have to create a RAM drive to do the job. Then the four files are kept permanently on a floppy disk and copied to the RAM drive each time the "fast" formatting is desired. This is so since the RAM drive ceases to exist when the computer is shut down.

If this is something you can use, and don't have time to put it in place now, save this tidbit in your "must do" pile. But one way or another, get the job done. One doesn't mind formatting one or two disks but when it gets to be more than that, this program can help save sanity. I know because I once had to format about 200 disks for a workshop I helped present. Formatting disks will never be fun but this program will at least take away some of the pain that goes with the procedure.

SOMETHING NEW

It was suggested last summer at our national conference in Greeley, CO that ideas on how to improve our farm and ranch business management education programs should be shared so that others would have the benefit of the experience.

The South Dakota instructors must have been listening because I received a letter from Brad Sanderson, Lake Preston, SD telling me of their experience in running a November 1989 workshop in Pierre. Here's Brad's letter:

FIRST ANNUAL AF/RBM MEMBER SEMINAR

Brad Sanderson
Lake Preston, SD 57249

On November 17 and 18 of this year, the South Dakota Adult Farm/Ranch Business Management Education Association held their first ever seminar for members enrolled in the 14 farm/ranch business management programs across the state. The seminar was held in conjunction with the Association's regular meeting, which was held on Friday, the 17th.

The member seminar, which was held at the Ramkota River Center in Pierre, was entitled "Strategic Planning: Management in the 1990s." We did go out of state for our key-note speaker and brought in Dr. Michael Boehlje, the University of Minnesota, to present his discussion on "Mega-Trends in Agriculture."

The South Dakota instructors began working on this seminar last summer, arranging for the speaker, entertainment, location, etc. Nearly all the instructors helped with the seminar, either through planning, carrying out details, doing actual presenting of topics at the seminar, helping with registration, and the many other details needed to pull off a seminar.

Although the Association met on Friday the 17th, the main body of the seminar was a one-day event, starting with a breakfast for everyone at 7:30 a.m. Welcomes and short addresses were provided by members of South Dakota education officials and by representatives of the South Dakota Department of Agriculture. Dr. Boehlje gave his presentation during the morning hours on Saturday, then after a noon meal with another out-of-stater as entertainment (Mylo Hutzenbuhler of Strasburg, ND), several instructors presented mini-sessions for those in attendance. The mini-sessions covered financial performance, crop and livestock budgeting, and working as a family unit. Our sessions were concluded by 5:00 Saturday afternoon.

The attendance at the seminar was not quite what we'd hoped for, but those who did attend were well pleased with the material presented. We will review the seminar and decide if one day was too short and whether or not this was a suitable time of year. But our thought now is to pursue the idea again next year and run it somewhat along the same lines.

If other states would like more information about what we did at our first annual AF/RBM member seminar, contact any of the South Dakota instructors.

Editor's Note: Although Brad didn't mention it in his letter, their advertising folder for the conference invited prospective farm/ranch management enrollees too. Looks like a terrific idea although in some states a state-wide meeting might not be practical. Certainly, a regional concept might be one way to go to conduct such a seminar. Anyway, thanks to the South Dakota people for presenting a first ever shared educational idea to other members of the National Farm and Ranch Business Management Education Association. Anyway, "keep them cards and letters comin'."

BUDGET AX FALLS

Many of you farm/ranch management instructors have either faced budget cuts, or the threat of budget cuts during your teaching career. Since the teaching of vocational agriculture, whether it be high school, young farmer, or adult is not compulsory, it is, by nature, subject to being much more exposed to financial cuts than Mathematics or English.

During my years of teaching farm management here in Minnesota, I think I spent half the time thinking about state financing drying up or being reduced.

North Dakota voters soundly defeated eight referral measures, several of them financial in nature, during a state-wide election in December 1989. The financial measures struck at every facet of education in the state, whether it be elementary, high school, vocational school or college.

Adult Farm/Ranch Management Education made the "hit list" following the election too when they were notified that the Farm Analysis Center, located at Bismarck State College, would be closed as of July 1, 1990 to help alleviate the 8% state budget cut forced upon the schools by the state-wide vote. This, despite the fact that North Dakota State University agricultural economics personnel have recognized the value of data generated by North Dakota farm or ranch families enrolled in the Management Education program during the 17 years that it's been in existence.

Harlan Hughes, NDSU extension livestock economist, recently completed an in-depth study of Beef Cow-Calf enterprise tables generated from 1978-1987. He concluded that if the lower 80% of producers would adopt the management practices of the top 20% of that group, that an additional \$125,000,000 in net income would be available to beef producers, annually, in the state.

According to Dr. Lawrence Helt, state-wide coordinator for the past several years, he received his notice during the early part of January. His position will be terminated the same date as the closing of the center and the program will be forced to operate in a manner much less efficiently than at present. Dr. Helt reports that the 8% cut will hit the farm families enrolled in the program very directly too. The lost funding will have to be absorbed by increased tuition at the local level.

The North Dakota program this year is running its farmer/rancher generated data using FINPAK software for the first time and the local, regional and state averages will be processed by the Center for Farm Financial Management at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. Plans were, until the announcement of the Center/Director termination, to process those averages at the Bismarck Center. It is not known, at present, what the outcome will be for the 1991 close-out season.

SOUTH DAKOTA HEARD FROM AGAIN

According to Gil Gullickson, an agricultural writer for Brookings, SD based WALLACES FARMER state funding for adult farm management has been drying up in South Dakota too. Statistics quoted by Gullickson say that local South Dakota programs were funded to the tune of \$38,000 from State coffers in 1987 and in fiscal year 1990 have fallen to \$30,600. In 1991 funding will sink to a level of only \$21,000 per program.

Gullickson writes that farmers enrolled in the management programs spend more on inputs than non-participants. In fact, his figures show that they spend more than twice as much per farm unit. Using the 4% sales tax charged in South Dakota for those extra expenditures, that tax generates nearly \$1.4 million. Current expenditures in South Dakota for the farm/ranch management program cost the state only \$450,000.

KEEP YOUR NOSE CLEAN

This grey headed, fat and slightly old ex-farm management teacher with a Norwegian accent, remembers the time he served on our state adult farm management advisory council when the group was given the job of writing a plan for teaching and financing farm management education in the state. He recalls the politicking that was a necessary part of that committee's job and remembers the hours meeting with vocational division officials and state legislators.

Ultimately, the program ended up pretty much like our group outlined it and it happened via the route of politics down the road a year or two.

What's the moral of this story? Whether you readers individually like politics or not, you're going to have to get into the game if you want to keep farm and ranch management education going in your school and your state. Talk to your state legislators and officials in charge of your programs. And don't forget your local officials either. Invite them to banquets and meetings and you'll have to "blow your own horn" whether you like it or not. But you will, of course, have to stand up to public scrutiny.

How to do it: A quote from the bible that my religious philosophy subscribes to states, "By their fruits ye shall know them." That may be the best way to "blow your horn." Then you may not have to brag at all.

STOLEN FROM TED

I'm on the mailing list of several area farm/ranch management instructors so I carefully glean the real gems out of them. In December I received my monthly missal from Ted Johnson, who teaches just across the Red River on the North Dakota side of the line, at Kindred, ND. From it I copped the following bits of wisdom that you can probably use in your program to make it better:

It has been stated that 86% of what it takes to make a business succeed is CONFIDENCE. If the farm manager is aware of where the business is headed, then obtaining confidence is much easier.

There are certain management strategies that successful managers use: (not in order of importance)

1. Problem solving attitudes - the person directs efforts toward problem solving rather than blaming the government, weather and other people.
2. TIMELINESS - organized and ready for the task at hand.
3. Conservative - but uses progressive management styles - consistently but will cautiously adopt new technology.
4. Appropriate balance between physical work and business decision making - balance between work and vacation time.
5. Wary of high debt levels when farming under conditions of uncertainty.
6. Business management skills - not a "way of life" attitude - base enterprise decisions on productivity calculations rather than just "expected" production.
7. Skilled at gathering up and interpreting information - a difficult task - use telephone, computer, magazines, and information subscriptions.
8. Anticipation - have long memories, know when to monitor situations closely.
9. Persistence - single minded determination to succeed, have a high degree of will power in crises.
10. Diversified business structures - applies to enterprise and financial diversification, so that "all the eggs are not in the same basket."
11. Suitability of enterprises to the area - choose only those enterprises best suited to their region, climate and soil type.
12. Has the confidence that the business is in a positive direction - this confidence is a written or proven example.

When times get tough we seem to get the "CRY WOLF SYNDROME." This is when a person believes it is necessary to always appear negative and unsuccessful. When the person is asked the question "how are things?" they answer "not good enough if the government, the banker, or the other person would just"

It's been said, "You are what you think you are." Let us think our friends are our friends, our business is a challenge, our family needs vacation time, and enjoy life. There is one thing guaranteed and that is we only get the one chance to around and around and where it stops nobody knows.

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